SubjectSignups™

the original web-based sign-up system

Experimenter's User Manual

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Publication History

24 Sep 1999	Initial publication.
09 Dec 1999	Updated page appearance changes.
09 Jan 2000	Minor modifications to explanations of tasks.
15 Mar 2000	Updated the experimenter navigation header to include the Recover a Lost Experiment hyperlink, and included a brief description of such in the Tour.
15 Feb 2006	Updated the participant navigation header to include the Search link, and included a brief description of such in the Tour. Brought the remainder of the manual up to date.
15 Jan 2009	New version to reflect the new, PHP & MySQL version of SubjSign.

Release History

16 August 1999 v1.00.990816
Initial release.

10 January 2000 v1.50.000110
Several cosmetic changes.
Changed the required subdirectory structure.
Changed the user manuals, as described in the Publication History section of each manual.
Removed the need for redundant radio buttons on the View Experiments and Edit Experiments pages.
Dynamic appointment dates on the View Experiments page. A date now disappears when there are no more times available for that date.
Fixed a flaw that deleted all identical appointment times when the first time was claimed.
Fixed a flaw that prevented correct update of instructor logs when a participant had two appointments for the same experiment.
Appointment times are now made available upon cancellation if the corresponding date exists in the data file.
Lengthened experiment description and participant specification fields on the Add New Experiment page.
Changed the instructor logs to keep each participant's information on a single line (formerly, it was one line per experiment--multiple lines per participant).
Added an Auto-Select All Sign-ups option on the Experiment Sign-ups page.
Removed the View Your Credits link in the experimenter navigation frame.
Configurable max dates and max times, applicable to all experiments.
Added an Import Participant ID Numbers page, to be used in conjunction with the Restrict Logins to Known Participants checkbox on the Configuration page. Please see the description of that option.
Added a Restrict Logins to Known Participants checkbox on the Configuration page, to be used in conjunction with the Import Participant ID Numbers page. These two options allow you to establish the list of potential participants before the semester begins, and thereafter restrict access to only those students.
Increased the number of initial instructor fields in the Create and Modify Instructor List page--20 fields initially, five extra fields on each subsequent submission.

15 March 2000 v1.60.000315
Changed the Change Administrator ID Number task; now old admin number is not carried over from first page, and old number must be successfully entered as part of the change.
Changed the storage format of #users.dat.
Added a date check upon experiment addition, edit, cancellation, and sign-up. For cancellation, dates on or after experiment dates are not allowed. For other tasks, dates prior to today will not be allowed.
Fixed a flaw regarding the use of spaces in dates and times, and the resultant storage problem.
Added the Recover a Lost Experiment option—the ability to recover experiment files lost due to uncompleted edits.
Fixed a flaw that wrote an extra data line in ExptNum.part files.
Updated the Import Credits task; now writes an entry in the #users.dat and Instructor.part files, and requires that instructor be selected at submission. Import files must now be instructor-specific.
Fixed a flaw that prevented assignment of negative credits from the Sign-up list page.
Added a randomizer to experiments as presented on the View Experiments page.
Added a better time sorter for the Sign-up list page.

03 March 2006 v2.00.060303
Miscellaneous adjustments.

15 January 2009 v. 3.00.090115
New version of SubjectSignups, now written in PHP and MySQL database (cf. Perl with flat-file). No frames; different Admin layout. Designed to be hosted by jwc, not an individual school. Ability to handle multiple schools with one interface. Added a couple more Admin options.

Original Foreword

With the rapid expansion of the world-wide web (WWW), many types of transactions currently take place on line. These transactions include retail purchases, banking, and securities trading, so it is not surprising that even educational institutions offer on-line services. Now educational institutions—specifically, psychology departments—can use the web as an avenue for logging and tracking participant sign-ups in human research programs. *SubjectSignups* offers a convenient answer to managing research participation via the world-wide web.

This manual provides an overview of *SubjectSignups* from an experimenter's or participant's perspective, and is intended to be read by experimenters. There is no need for a manual explaining participants' use of *SubjectSignups*, and participants should not have access to these manuals. Some information on experimenters' use of *SubjectSignups* is reserved by the administrator, and experimenters should contact their administrator for that necessary information. Information for administrators of *SubjectSignups*, including technical information on data storage and file management, may be found elsewhere, in the *SubjectSignups* Administrator's Manual and Technical Reference.

There is no reason that *SubjectSignups* should not continue to mature. Consequently, small portions of this manual may be inconsistent with the actual *SubjectSignups*. If they exist, these inconsistencies do not represent a lack of attention to documentation; rather, they simply represent a lag time between implementation of new functions and the public documentation of those functions. You may be assured that this manual was current as of the date of publication, and that new functions will soon be documented. If you find inconsistencies that need attention, or wish to contact me for any other reason, you may do so at the addresses below. I thank you for trying *SubjectSignups*, and I hope all works well for you.

-James Corpening
24 September 1999

380 Taunton Place, upper
Buffalo, NY 14216-1926
gymus@yahoo.com

New Foreword

The world-wide web, or just "the web," has certainly expanded, even if its maturity is still in question. Nevertheless, the web is a very convenient medium in which to manage many types of transctions, including participant sign-ups in human research programs. To that end, *SubjectSignups* offers a convenient, web-based answer to managing research participation in research programs.

As did its predecessor, this manual provides an overview of *SubjectSignups*, but there are some notable differences in the program. *SubjectSignups* has been rewritten in the scripting language PHP, using a MySQL database, whereas earlier versions were written in Perl, using a flat-file database system. Furthermore, *SubjectSignups* is designed to be hosted remotely, not on a college's or university's server, although that is still an option.

There is no need for a manual explaining participants' use of *SubjectSignups*, and **participants should not have access to these manuals**. Please do not print this manual, and be cautious about with whom you share it. If you find inconsistencies between *SubjectSignups* and this manual, or wish to contact me for any other reason, you may do so at the addresses below. I thank you for using *SubjectSignups*, and I hope all works well for you. Remember, though, that adequate testing of any software is essential before it is put into production. I welcome your suggestions for improvement.

I acknowledge that use of the term *subject* to refer to human participants is considered by many, if not most, to be inappropriate and out of date. For that reason, this manual has been updated to reflect this contemporary attitude. I have chosen to keep the name of the product the same, however, so as not to introduce confusion in the minds of users.

-James Corpening
15 January 2009

428 W. Delavan Ave.
Buffalo, NY 14213-1413
gymus@yahoo.com

Introduction

SubjectSignups is a web-based manager of human participant pool sign-ups and data, designed to be used by psychology departments that support human research and rely on participation by students. This version of *SubjectSignups* is written in the scripting language PHP for use on a web server, and it uses a MySQL database to hold and manage data. There are three types of log-ins available: Participant, Experimenter, and Administrator. Participants can view experiments and available appointment times, make appointments, cancel appointments, and view their sign-ups. Experimenters can do what participants can do (except viewing credits), but have further privileges to create, edit, and delete experiments, view sign-ups for a given experiment, and assign credit for participation. Administrators can do several administrative tasks, such as configure the system, e-mail credit reports, etc.

The traditional system for participant pool sign-ups involves paper-based announcement of new experiments, often posted in one departmental location, and participant sign-ups from that same location. Experience reveals that the annoying problems with paper-based sign-ups include

- students crowding the department halls registering for participation in experiments
- students not tracking their own sign-ups and participation credits
- students not notifying experimenters to cancel participation
- experimenters and coordinators manually logging data

Some of the advantages of *SubjectSignups* are

- remote sign-ups (may be done from home or campus computer labs)
- sign-ups and credits are logged and viewable by students and experimenters
- e-mail notification of sign-ups and cancellations
- digital record of student sign-up and participation
- central collection of a semester's data

SubjectSignups makes use of cookies during its operation. Cookies have a bad reputation, and deservedly so. People who write cookies into their web pages often push the cookies onto a user's hard drive and set an expiration date ten years in the future. Most of the sites that do this, however, do not need to write cookies to your computer. *SubjectSignups* uses temporary cookies that are not written to a user's hard drive, but expire when the user's browser is closed. If a user's browser does not support, or a user declines, cookies, *SubjectSignups* will not work correctly. As of the date of this manual, browsers that successfully work with *SubjectSignups* are Mozilla Firefox (1.0 or higher), Internet Explorer (3.0 or higher), and Opera (3.21 or higher).

Tour of *SubjectSignups*

Following is a graphical tour of the *SubjectSignups* pages. Each figure displays one of the *SubjectSignups* pages, and is followed by a description of the actions associated with that page. Although present throughout all interactions (except log-in pages), the navigation headers are displayed here in only the first figure of each of the Participant and Experimenter sections of The Tour. All options available to participants are available to experimenters (except viewing credits). The terms *administrator* and *coordinator* are used somewhat interchangably.

Participant Pages

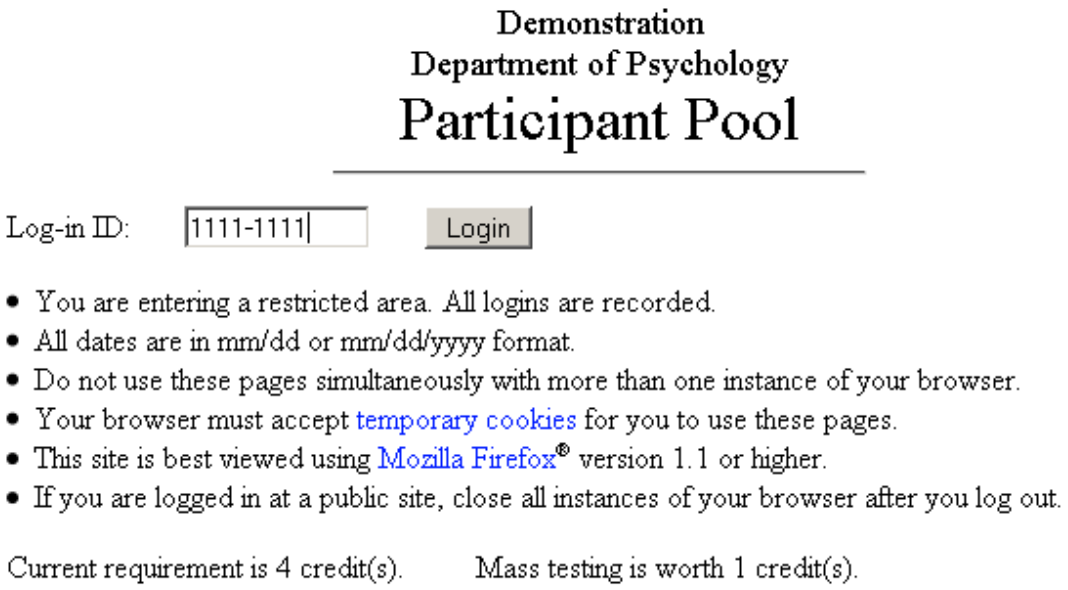

Demonstration
Department of Psychology
Participant Pool
Log-in ID:
1111-1111
Login
You are entering a restricted area. All logins are recorded.
All dates are in mm/dd or mm/dd/yyyy format.
Do not use these pages simultaneously with more than one instance of your browser.
Your browser must accept temporary cookies for you to use these pages.
This site is best viewed using Mozilla Firefox® version 1.1 or higher.
If you are logged in at a public site, close all instances of your browser after you log out.
Current requirement is 4 credit(s).
Mass testing is worth 1 credit(s).

Figure 1. Participant Log-in page.

The Log-in page (Figure 1) is the page from which participants, experimenters, and administrators log into *SubjectSignups*. There are different log-in pages for participants, experimenters, and administrators, but the pages are almost identical to each other. From the experimenter log-in page, log-in identification numbers are checked against the list of approved identification numbers, as set by the administrator.

List Experiments
Search
Your Appointments
Log Out
List Experiments
• To see more information, and maybe sign up for an experiment, click the corresponding More button.
#7686
More
Title: Feel the Pain
Credits: 2
Description: You will be either a teacher or learner, and we will test the effect of electric shock on learning.
Participant Specifications: Must respect men in white lab coats, and obediently follow directions.
Dates: 04/08 07/05 07/06
#1773
More
Title: Press the Bar
Credits: 1
Description: Participant will be rewarded if he or she presses on the correct schedule.
Participant Specifications: Must be able to press a steel lever or bar.
Dates: 08/06 12/06

Figure 2. List Experiments page.

The List Experiments page (Figure 2) is the first page to load upon leaving either the participant or the experimenter log-in page, and is also loaded when participants or experimenters select the List Experiments hyperlink in the navigation header. It is here that participants see what experiments are available, the list of which is presented in random order each time the page is loaded. Summary information is provided for keyword searches (via the browser's Find command). Experiment dates listed on this page change as participants register for (and exhaust) available appointment times, and as experimenters update (or create) experiment information. Participants must select the More button next to the desired experiment to reach the Experiment Signup page, where they can see detailed information about the desired experiment.

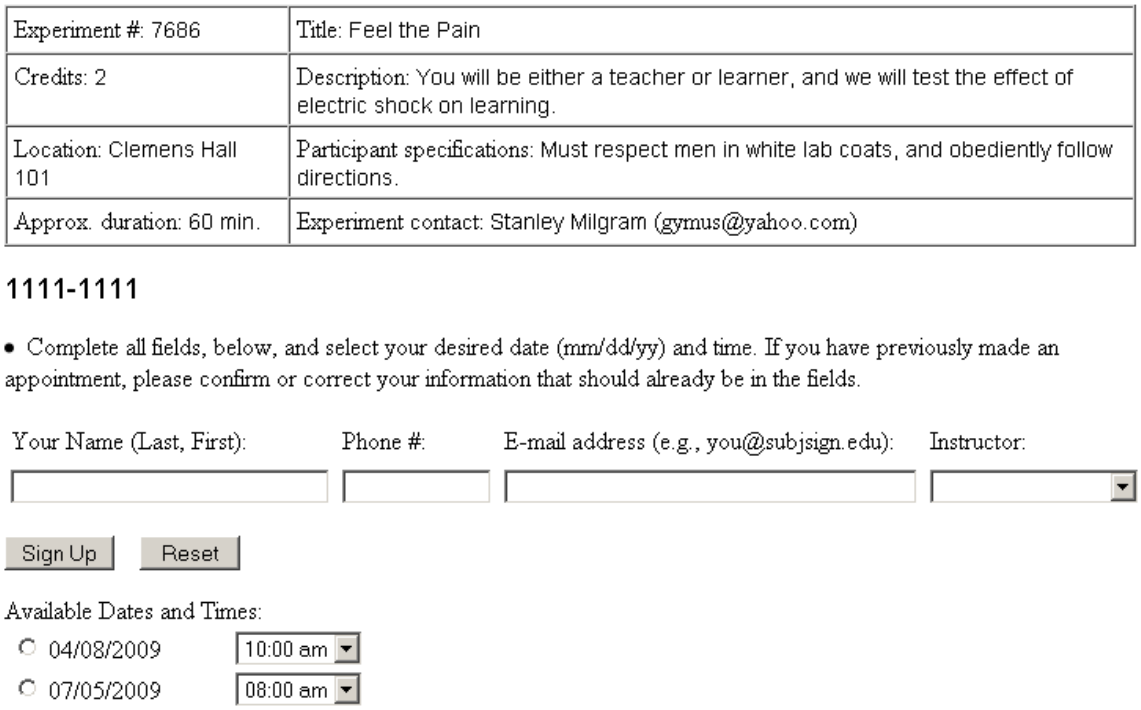

Experiment Sign-up
Experiment #: 7686
Title: Feel the Pain
Credits: 2
Description: You will be either a teacher or learner, and we will test the effect of electric shock on learning.
Location: Clemens Hall 101
Participant specifications: Must respect men in white lab coats, and obediently follow directions.
Approx. duration: 60 min.
Experiment contact: Stanley Milgram (gymus@yahoo.com)
1111-1111
• Complete all fields, below, and select your desired date (mm/dd/yy) and time. If you have previously made an appointment, please confirm or correct your information that should already be in the fields.
Your Name (Last, First):
Phone #:
E-mail address (e.g., you@subjsign.edu):
Instructor:
Sign Up
Reset
Available Dates and Times:
04/08/2009
10:00 am
07/05/2009
08:00 am

Figure 3. Experiment Sign-up page.

The Experiment Sign-up page (Figure 3) is the page at which participants see detailed information about the selected experiment, and choose the desired date and time of participation. After entering the required information (instructor list is established by the administrator), selecting the desired date and time, and selecting the Sign Up button, participants are asked to confirm their selection (page not shown). After confirming their selection, participants receive confirmation of their registration (page not shown) and sign-up information is e-mailed to the experiment contact and to the participant. This page is not directly accessible from any navigation header; rather, this page loads from the List Experiments page.

Figure 4. Search page.

Figure 4 displays the Search page. From this page participants can search for experiments by month, date, and/or hour. Once they select at least one criterion and then select the Search button, participants will receive a Search Results page (not shown). From the Search Results page, participants can click the Sign Up button that corresponds to a given experiment to go directly to that Experiment Sign-Up page.

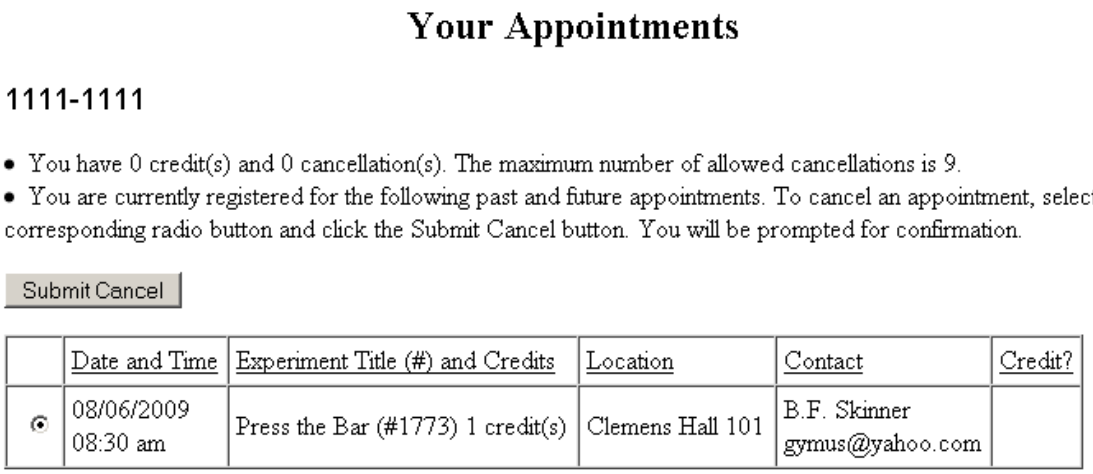

Your Appointments
1111-1111
• You have 0 credit(s) and 0 cancellation(s). The maximum number of allowed cancellations is 9.
• You are currently registered for the following past and future appointments. To cancel an appointment, select the corresponding radio button and click the Submit Cancel button. You will be prompted for confirmation.
Submit Cancel
Date and Time
Experiment Title (#) and Credits
Location
Contact
Credit?
08/06/2009 08:30 am
Press the Bar (#1773) 1 credit(s)
Clemens Hall 101
B.F. Skinner gymus@yahoo.com

Figure 5. Your Appointments page.

Figure 5 displays the Your Appointments page, which where participants can see the appointments for which they are presently registered, see the number of credits assigned them by experimenters, and cancel appointments. The appointments listed here include those appointments that participants have satisfied or cancelled, as well as those that they have yet to satisfy. After selecting an appointment and selecting the Submit Cancel button, participants are asked to confirm their cancellation. (page not shown). After confirming their cancellation, participants receive confirmation of the cancellation (page not shown), cancellation information is e-mailed to the experiment contact, and the relinquished date and time are made available for others. Cancellations are not allowed less than one day before the experiment.

Experimenter Pages

Experimenters, please take note: DO NOT compromise your experiment sign-ups, or the sign-up system as a whole, by leaving your web browser open to use by another individual. Also, please allow only those individuals directly accountable for experiments to serve as experimenters (e.g., do not assign a one-semester undergraduate assistant the role of experimenter). Some security can be maintained by simple common sense, so please use it. The List Experiments page and the Search page are not described in this section; rather, they are described, above, in the Participant Pages section.

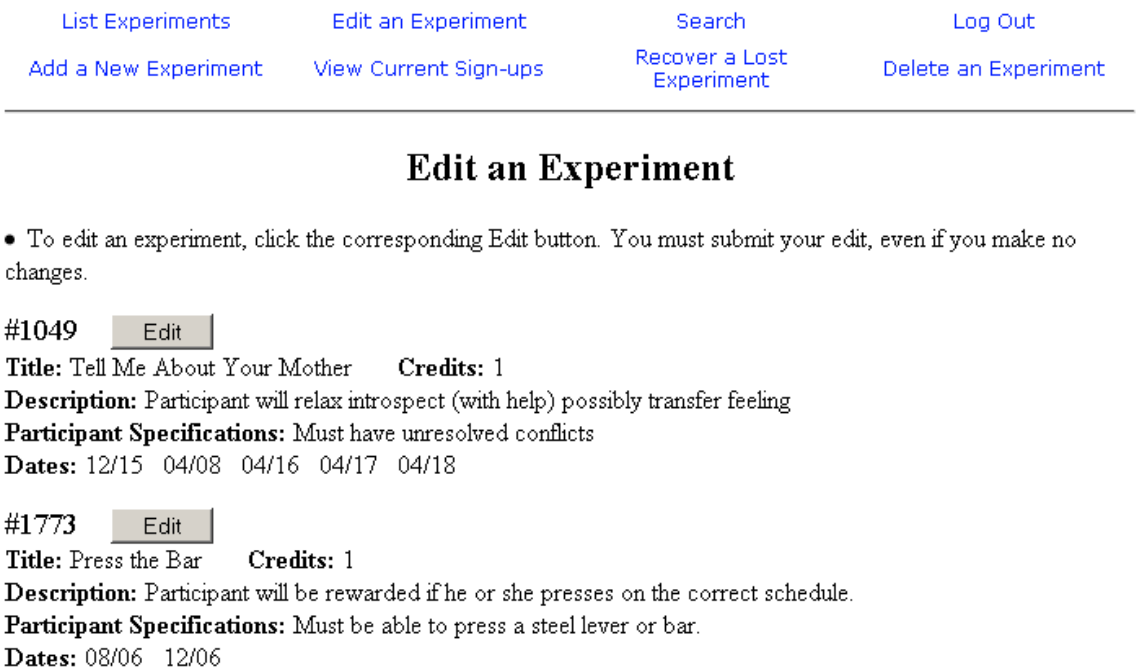

List Experiments
Edit an Experiment
Search
Log Out
Add a New Experiment
View Current Sign-ups
Recover a Lost Experiment
Delete an Experiment
Edit an Experiment
• To edit an experiment, click the corresponding Edit button. You must submit your edit, even if you make no changes.
#1049
Edit
Title: Tell Me About Your Mother
Credits: 1
Description: Participant will relax introspect (with help) possibly transfer feeling
Participant Specifications: Must have unresolved conflicts
Dates: 12/15 04/08 04/16 04/17 04/18
#1773
Edit
Title: Press the Bar
Credits: 1
Description: Participant will be rewarded if he or she presses on the correct schedule.
Participant Specifications: Must be able to press a steel lever or bar.
Dates: 08/06 12/06

Figure 6. Edit an Experiment page.

Figure 6 displays the Edit an Experiment page (including the experimenter navigation header. This page is almost identical to the View Experiments page (described in the Participant Pages section), but allows the experimenter to edit the selected experiment's information. Once in edit mode, the experimenter edits information in the same page in which one would create a new experiment. After editing information and selecting the Submit button in the editing page, updated experiment information is saved, and notice of the modification is e-mailed to the experiment contact and to the administrator.

Experimenters Important Notes: Experiments (but not sign-ups) are removed from *SubjectSignups* when experimenters edit experiments. Experimenters must, therefore, submit the experiment information even if they make no changes. If, however, an experiment is lost due to an incomplete edit, it can be recovered in the Recover a Lost Experiment page.

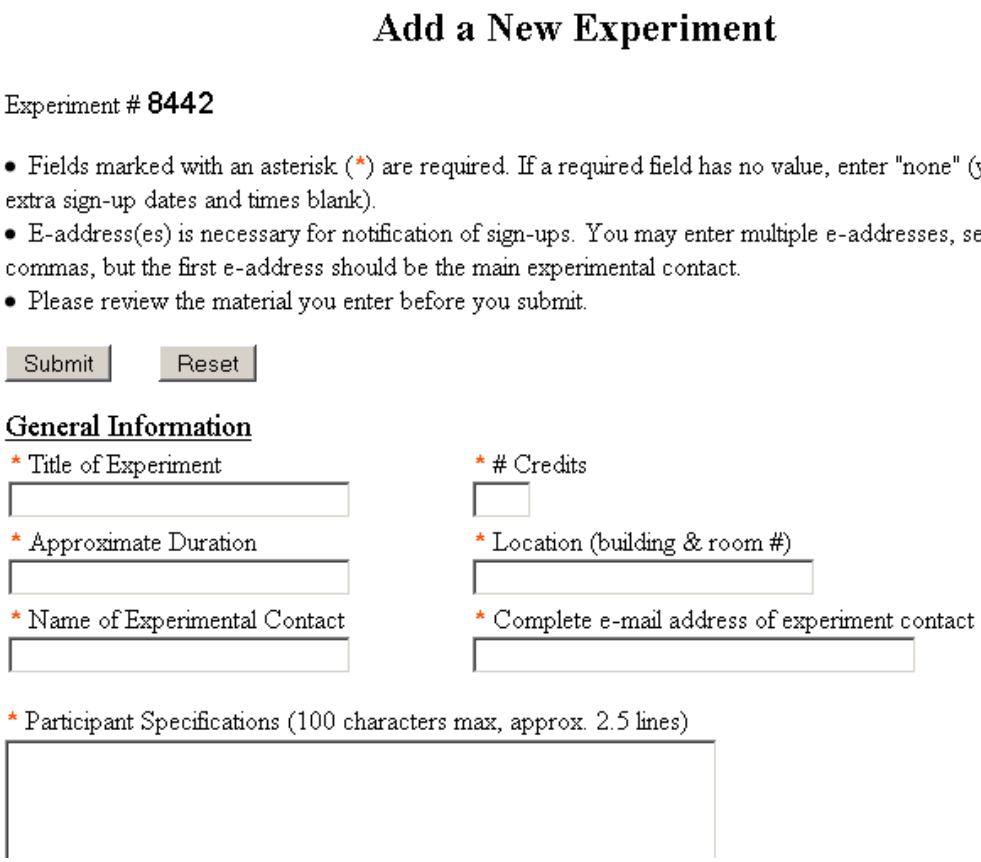

Add a New Experiment
Experiment # 8442
• Fields marked with an asterisk (*) are required. If a required field has no value, enter "none" (you may leave extra sign-up dates and times blank).
• E-address(es) is necessary for notification of sign-ups. You may enter multiple e-addresses, separated by commas, but the first e-address should be the main experimental contact.
• Please review the material you enter before you submit.
Submit
Reset
General Information
* Title of Experiment
* # Credits
* Approximate Duration
* Location (building & room #)
* Name of Experimental Contact
* Complete e-mail address of experiment contact
* Participant Specifications (100 characters max, approx. 2.5 lines)

Figure 7. Add a New Experiment page.

The Add a New Experiment page (Figure 7 is just that--the page in which to add a new experiment. After entering the required information and selecting the Submit button, the new experiment is added to *SubjectSignups*, and notice is e-mailed to the experiment contact as well as to the participant pool coordinator. The experiment will not be available on the List Experiments page, though, until the administrator enables it. The numbers of date and time slots (below Participant Specifications) are configured by the administrator. This page is the same as the page in which experimenters edit existing experiment information.

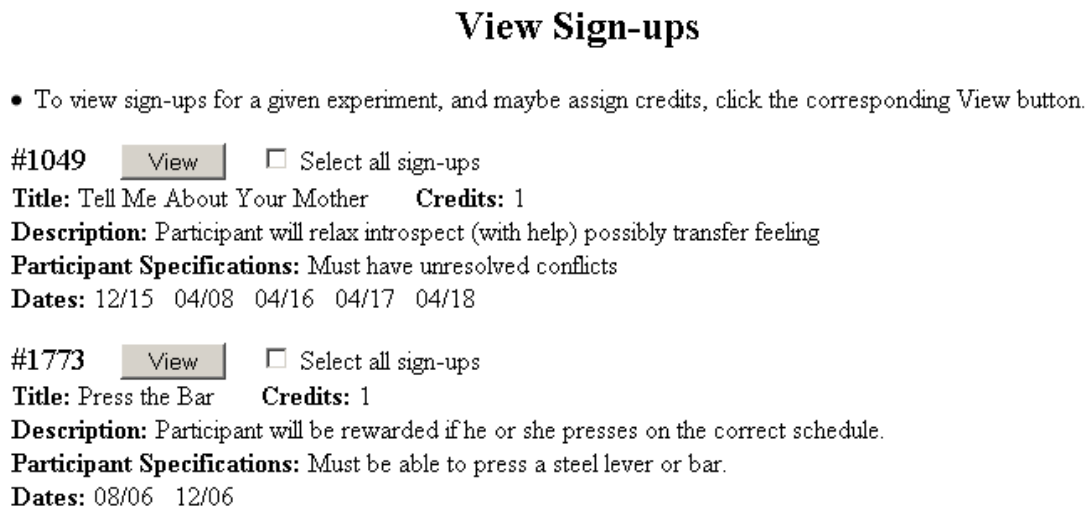
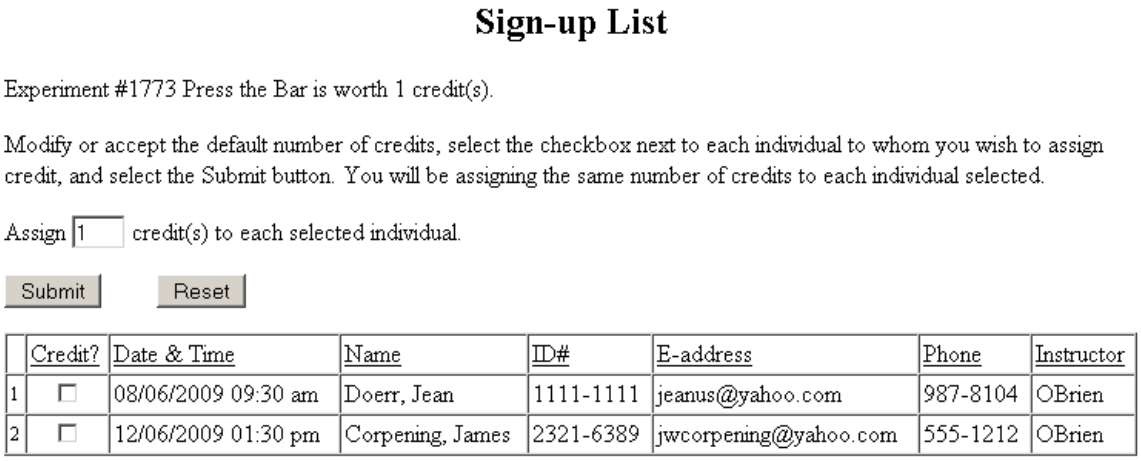

View Sign-ups
To view sign-ups for a given experiment, and maybe assign credits, click the corresponding View button.
#1049
View
Select all sign-ups
Title: Tell Me About Your Mother
Credits: 1
Description: Participant will relax introspect (with help) possibly transfer feeling
Participant Specifications: Must have unresolved conflicts
Dates: 12/15 04/08 04/16 04/17 04/18
#1773
View
Select all sign-ups
Title: Press the Bar
Credits: 1
Description: Participant will be rewarded if he or she presses on the correct schedule.
Participant Specifications: Must be able to press a steel lever or bar.
Dates: 08/06 12/06

Figure 8. View Sign-ups page.

Figure 8 displays the View Sign-ups page, which the page from which experimenters see the present sign-ups for any experiment. This page is also the first step in assigning positive or negative credits to participants, thus removing them from the sign-ups list. After selecting a View button, experimenters are presented with the Sign-ups page (see Figure 10). Experimenters can automatically select all sign-ups on the Sign-ups page by selecting the Select all sign-ups checkbox on this page.



Sign-up List

Experiment #1773 Press the Bar is worth 1 credit(s).

Modify or accept the default number of credits, select the checkbox next to each individual to whom you wish to assign credit, and select the Submit button. You will be assigning the same number of credits to each individual selected.

Assign 1 credit(s) to each selected individual.

Submit Reset

	Credit?	Date & Time	Name	ID#	E-address	Phone	Instructor
1	☐	08/06/2009 09:30 am	Doerr, Jean	1111-1111	jeanus@yahoo.com	987-8104	OBrien
2	☐	12/06/2009 01:30 pm	Corpening, James	2321-6389	jwcorpening@yahoo.com	555-1212	OBrien

Figure 9. Sign-up List page.

The Sign-up List page (Figure 10) is the page in which experimenters view currently scheduled participants, and assign credit (e.g., 2) or no credit (i.e., 0). Negative credits must be assigned by an administrator. After either modifying or accepting the number of credits reported at the top of the page, and selecting the Credit checkbox next to participants, an experimenter submits the task and receives confirmation of the credited participants. If the experimenter changes the default number of credits to a negative number, the selected participants will lose that number of credits. This page is not directly accessible from any navigation header; rather, this page loads from the View Sign-ups page. Note that an experimenter will assign the same number of credits to all individuals selected; assigning both negative and positive credits to different individuals requires two submissions. As of the date of this manual, errors in assigning credits can only be corrected via the administrator pages.

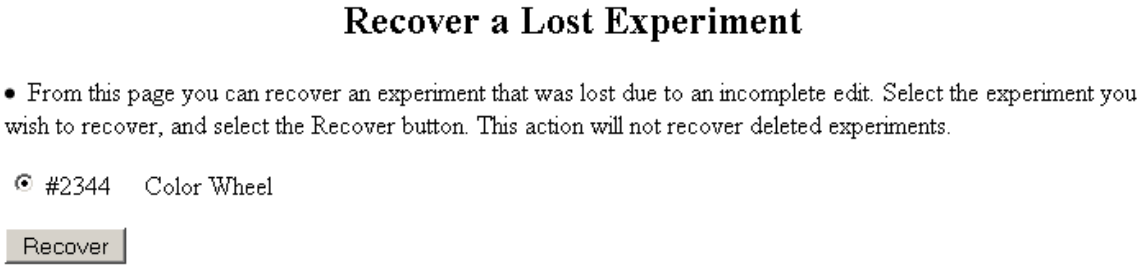

Recover a Lost Experiment
From this page you can recover an experiment that was lost due to an incomplete edit. Select the experiment you wish to recover, and select the Recover button. This action will not recover deleted experiments.
#2344 Color Wheel
Recover

Figure 10. Recover a Lost Experiment page.

The Recover a Lost Experiment page (Figure 10) is the page from which experimenters can recover experiments lost to an incomplete edit. Selecting an experiment's radio button and then the Recover button will make the lost experiment accessible from the List Experiments page.

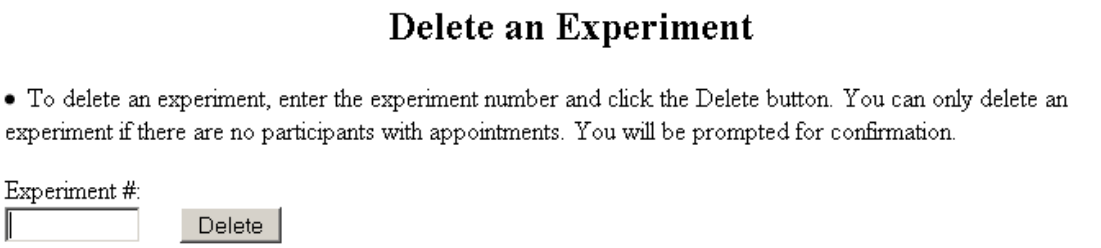

Delete an Experiment
• To delete an experiment, enter the experiment number and click the Delete button. You can only delete an experiment if there are no participants with appointments. You will be prompted for confirmation.
Experiment #:
Delete

Figure 11. Delete an Experiment page.

Figure 11 displays the Delete an Experiment. After entering an experiment number and selecting the Delete button, experimenters are asked to confirm the deletion (page not shown). After confirming the deletion, notice is e-mailed to the experiment contact as well as to the participant pool.

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